



**EU FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CIVIL SOCIETY IN  
TURKEY: SHRINKING THE POLITICAL SPACE IN THE  
POST-GEZI PROCESS?**

**AB'NİN TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SİVİL TOPLUM  
ÖRGÜTLERİNE FİNANSAL DESTEĞİ: GEZİ SÜRECİ  
SONRASI SİYASİ ALANIN DARALMASI MI?**

**Sinem BAL\***

**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the EU's stance on post-Gezi civic engagement, which is based on alternative alliances and against the anti-democratic extremes of state power. Using a Gramscian perspective, the paper underlines the fact that before the protests, Turkey's civil society had been politically socialized by the help of EU financial assistance as a sign of an ideology of consent. That is, the EU has focused on liberal-democratic cooperation with civic organic intellectuals, based on the conviction that civil society is the engine for social and political transformation. However, even though civil society organizations have strengthened their catalysing role and become a new counter-hegemonic political space since the Gezi protests, it is argued that Turkey's normative distance from the EU and the pragmatic links between the EU and Turkey over refugees have led the EU to reduce its financial relationships with Turkey's rights-based civil society.

**Keywords:** EU Funds, Civil Society, EU-Turkey Relations, Gezi Protests, Gramsci.

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## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Gezi sonrası alternatif ittifaklara dayalı ve devletin aşırı anti-demokratik gücüne karşı duran sivil katılıma dair AB'nin tavrını incelemektedir. Çalışma, Gramşiyen bir perspektiften yararlanarak protestolar öncesi Türkiye'deki sivil toplumun AB ideolojik rızasının işareti olan finansal destekler yardımıyla siyasal olarak sosyalleştiğinin altını çizer. Böylelikle, AB sivil organik aydınlarla yapılacak liberal demokratik işbirliğine odaklanmış ve bunu sivil toplumun sosyal ve siyasal dönüşümünün itici gücü olduğu kanaatine dayanmıştır. Ne var ki, her ne kadar Gezi sonrası sivil toplum örgütlerinin katalizör rolü daha da güçlenmiş ve yeni karşı hegemonik siyasi alan olsalar da Türkiye'nin AB'den normatif uzaklığı ve mülteciler üzerinden AB ve Türkiye arasında kurulan pragmatik bağ AB'nin Türkiye'deki hak temelli sivil toplum örgütleri ile arasındaki finansal ilişkinin azalmasına yol açtığı iddia edilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** AB Fonları, Sivil Toplum, AB-Türkiye ilişkileri, Gezi Protestoları, Gramsci.

## INTRODUCTION

The EU's strengthening civil society policy in the enlargement round was designed for the candidates states to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria, "which required aspirant states to have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities, a functioning market economy and the ability to take on the obligations of EU law" (İçduygu, 2011: 381). In all progress reports, European Commission encourages civil society organisations (CSOs) to get professionalized and increase formal interactions with state actors (Wunsch, 2018). That is, the EU's financial support to CSOs with the aim of fostering a democracy from below also pushes for a new model of active citizenship in the Union's neighbourhood and third country policies. On the other hand, CSOs are also conceptualized as lobby groups, which are economically driven interests within pluralist market democracies (Kurki, 2011a) and able to work in project circles that allow for the assessment of effective implementation to be efficient in terms of costs and benefits, self-responsibility and accountability (Müehlenhoff, 2014). This can clearly be seen in the "DG Enlargement Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries: 2014-2020" document in which the EU indicates:

The enlargement countries face a range of challenges, especially in fields such as the rule of law, corruption, organised crime, the economy and social cohesion. Civil Society actors and organisations can make a substantial contribution to addressing many of these through their lobbying, advocacy and oversight activities at national, regional and local level (2014: 1).

In that sense, following the EU's acceptance of Turkey's candidacy, Turkey represents an interesting case by providing an empirical scope for the development of civil society, which is conceived "something more than an associational life outside of the state and instead as a sphere that contributes to public participation and democratisation on a voluntary basis" (İçduygu, 2011: 382). Evolutions in the civic engagement starts with economic and partly political liberalisation in 1980s and then 1990s. Mainly due to the military interventions since the 1960, civil society has been contingent upon a state tradition, and it was not easy for society both to consolidate democracy from below and become active citizens over civil society. Hence the EU's civil society policy in candidate countries opens a new frontier that is out of the mainstream policy making.

Since the amendment of the Association Law in 2004 and the start of accession negotiations in 2005, CSOs have proliferated in Turkey while their capacity has been strengthened by EU financial assistance. Specifically, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The IPA I (2007-2013) and IPA II (2014-2020) funds were allocated by programmes supporting civil society capacity building through a grant scheme for the civil society programme and civil society dialogue between Turkey and the EU whereas the EIDHR only funds rights-based CSOs to prioritize human rights advocacy and democracy promotion. Despite the EU's active role in sponsoring the activities of these CSOs, some researchers argue that increasing numbers of CSOs has not had a qualitative impact because democratization and producing right-based policies are still very limited in Turkey (Ergun, 2010; Ketola, 2013; Doyle, 2016; Muehlenhoff, 2014-2019; Zihnioglu, 2013-2019a). Hence, the linkage between the EU and the civil society organizations in Turkey has turned into a web of funding channels that have gradually been depoliticized civil society as they compete to get money from the EU.

One of the fracture points in civil society's widespread politization in Turkey was the Gezi Park Uprising in 2013, when spontaneous environmental protests became a collective resistance against the government's anti-democratic authoritarianism. Gezi protests are indeed a successor of the populist social movements such as Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Movimiento 15-M (or Indignados Movement) in Spain and the Aganaktismenoi movement in Greece all of which have erupted as a reaction to economic stagnation occurred due to 2008

financial collapse and the rise of authoritarianism across the globe. These protests have demonstrated the limits of global capitalism and unveil those who demand a social change. They organize regardless of political affiliation, class, race and gender (Welsh, 2019) as they “expressed the longing of the multitude for a ‘real democracy’ against corporate capitalism” (Kaya, 2016:7). In a similar vein, Gezi protests enabled certain groups to gain visibility in the public sphere while other loose groups constituting the political opposition expressed their dissent against the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government’s restrictive policies. The common point of all these demonstrations is also the repertoires of protest, including occupations, the use of social media, humour and art (David and Côté-Real Pinto, 2017).

Following the civic activism in reaction to the Turkish government’s aggressive violence against protestors, which resulted in a deterioration in democracy and human rights in Turkey, the EU expressed its concerns through its leader’s discourses and the 2013 progress report’s criticisms. Hence this process paves the way for a burgeoning new literature on the role of protests on democratization of Turkey and the EU-Turkey relations over the Gezi Park protests. For the latter, some studies have focused mostly on how AKP government’s statement of not recognizing the European Parliament decision on Turkey on June 12, 2013, reveals Turkey’s drift from the democratic norms (Yılmaz, 2014) and influenced the EU’s decisions about vetoing, postponing or suspending the membership negotiations (Saatçioğlu, 2015). For others #OccupyGezi can be perceived as reflections of Europeanisation of Turkish civil society as they have learned to raise claims about pluralist democracy (Öner, 2014; Kaya, 2016). Furthermore, it is also argued that likewise European counterparts and Turkish CSOs interaction with the EU institutions, organizations that participated in the Gezi protests reproduce and frames European discourses and highlight EU leverage and linkage (David and Côté-Real Pinto, 2017). On the other hand, from a social movement perspective, some scholars concern how Gezi uprising foster new type of civic activism such as forums, which gather historically distant groups and help to overcome deep-seated cleavages (Uğur-Çınar and Çisel-Arabacı, 2020), focus on specific local problems (Akçalı, 2018) and ability to work on multiple issues by constructing alliances that signal a potential to bring greater impact in local and nation-wide (Zihnioğlu, 2019d). On the contrary, there are also those who acknowledge Gezi as a counter-hegemonic struggle against the state’s hegemonic power. Yet for them, there is still a need for transforming the selves in which different subject positions can open up themselves to each other (Gençoğlu-Onbaşı, 2016) in the spheres such as Gezi. Because at the end of protests, Gezi populism neither formed the unity of an equivalential ensemble and a party nor crystallised into a unified collective will (Özen, 2015).

Even though the literature deciphers the influence of Gezi protests in many aspects, there has been less investigation of how the EU has responded to these new alliances and ensured their survival through EU funding in post-Gezi period. During the protests, it is true that these dispersed groups evolved into a counter-hegemonic alliance against AKP authoritarianism and aimed to make the state more democratic and respectful of human rights, both of which are fundamental EU political criteria. Hence, drawing on a Gramscian conceptualization of civil society, this paper examines how much the EU has financially supported the right-based organizations that form a new alliance since the Gezi protests. It is necessary to stress that Turkish civil societies' approach to the EU funding is not the main concern in this article.

Methodologically, the study problematizes the beneficiaries of EU-funded projects (IPA I, IPA II, EIDHR), allocated only to civil society organizations in Turkey between 2007-2013 and 2014- 2020. Here, among these funds the focus is given to degree EU finances the right-based organizations. All the funding transferred to human rights and democracy issues are categorized by considering their priorities, type of the projects, number of the beneficiaries and the amount of the budget. That is, since the categories and the priorities of the funds are concerned, there are two significant findings become prominent. First, despite the Turkish government's increasing de-democratization and human rights violence since the protests, the EU's waning sponsorship fails to offer sustainable support for advocacy organizations and for their survival. Second, Turkish human rights CSOs have been neoliberally restructured and reproduced along with the new funding priorities, which turned solidarity into competition and limited the CSOs that can benefit from it.

In order to reveal the EU's funding mechanism to the right-based CSOs, the paper is structured as follows. The first and second sections reviews the role and significance of civil society in EU-Turkey relations from a critical perspective, which problematizes EU sponsorship and its consent production over civil society. The third section analyses the first period of EU financial assistance through the material and ideological pillars by examining the projects' contents and beneficiaries. This clearly shows how the EU divides and unites civil society while the AKP government redesigns the function of the civil society organizations. The fourth section discusses Turkey's normative distance from EU political conditionality, the accumulated social grievances of the citizens against these undemocratic practices of the government, and how these reactions paved the way for collective resistance and a new democratic composition. The final section manifests how and with what content the second period of the EU financial assistance endorsed this new democratic bloc and its civil society projections.

## 1. THE NEED FOR A EUROPEANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

When the Helsinki Summit recognized its candidacy in 1999, Turkey began democratic reforms based on EU conditionality. Since negotiations started in 2005, EU-Turkey relations have been conducted by the AKP government. In contrast to previous Islamist parties, AKP presented itself as a pro-European, market-friendly and democratic-party with conservatism during its first years in power. Because EU candidate states must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights along with a well-functioning market economy, under the neoliberal restructuring of Turkey's EU membership bid, its conservative-liberal policies went hand in hand with promoting civilian politics over military tutelage (Altınörs and Aydın, 2022). Drawing this neoliberal transformation, the EU insisted on several administrative reforms to strengthen transparency, productivity, and results-oriented decision-making (Bee and Kaya, 2017), all of which included the cultivation of democracy and the development of civil society from below (Kubicek, 2011). Accordingly, changes for Turkish civil society started with the amendments in 2004 and 2008, respectively lifting restrictions in the Associations Law and the Foundations Law. This aim was endorsed both by non-governmental market actors, such as the Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), which is one of Turkey's capitalist social forces, and civic actors lobbying for democracy and human rights in both Brussels and Turkey, such as the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly.

In 2005, the EU also offered a platform for inter-civil society dialogue called the Civil Society Dialogue Programme, which supports projects by framing the outline of the dialogue between the EU and candidate countries' civil society actors (European Union Commission, 2005). Then, in 2008, it established the Civil Society Facility (CSF) to endorse CSOs in candidate countries within the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Programme. By implementing such mechanisms, the EU indicated its concern regarding three main areas: fulfilling membership conditions, especially in the countries where CSOs are less effective or unable to enter into dialogue with the public authorities; enhancing social capital and reducing the information gap. Especially regarding the latter, the EU gives a 'watchdog' role to the organizations that are expected to monitor the Turkish government's (un)democratic practices and report government's failure to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria. That is, the EU considered CSOs as an alternative avenue for negotiation as well as vehicles for achieving specific goals decided by the EU (Doyle, 2016).

Since the negotiations started according to the Ministry of Interior the Directorate General for Relations with Civil Society database<sup>1</sup>, 103.221 civil society organizations are active today. The number of the organizations has increased more than 10 times and of these, only 1523 organizations are rights-based<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, based on the Directorate General of Foundations website, there are 6.074 foundations in Turkey and 5645 of them are new<sup>3</sup>. EU financial assistance to these CSOs flows through the IPA and EIDHR community programmes. IPA programmes support civil society capacity building and civil society dialogue between Turkey and the EU. The budget is channelled directly to the Turkish government to facilitate harmonization with the EU *acquis* and encourage political and economic reform. The Turkish government and the EU Delegation in Turkey meet annually to prioritize the recipients of IPA funding. This is allocated through the Central Finance and Contracting Unit (CFCU), which was established “as part of the accession negotiations in order to develop an umbrella structure aimed at transferring the contracting authority of the European Commission to the Turkish government” (Ketola, 2013:115). EIDHR, on the other hand, funds rights-based CSOs that help to meet the political criteria regarding human rights and democracy. Its thematic funding, which was first formulated in 2006, has been systematically allocated since 2007. As one of the EU’s bottom-up civil society financial instruments, EIDHR excludes government involvement in the project cycle while its independent budget is controlled by the EU Delegation in Turkey.

Regarding the project priorities and beneficiaries in Turkey, IPA I and II funds finance three types of CSOs in Turkey. The first group is right-based and service-based organizations, which “provide social services in areas where social policies are not properly implemented by the state” (Bal, 2019:131). The promotion of welfare governance focuses on these organizations (such as foundations for health or education) as a part of aggressive economic liberalization to reduce state responsibility (Morvaridi, 2013). The second group is the public chambers, public unions (professional organizations), and university research centres, all of which are expected to contribute to the negotiations of the *acquis* chapters (e.g., agricultural engineers’ chamber works for developing agriculture and livestock policies in line with the *acquis*) in different policy areas. Organizations in this group are mostly asked to produce policies by doing field research or to raise awareness in their specialized areas through training activities

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<sup>1</sup> More information is available at <https://siviltoplum.gov.tr/dernekler-bilgi-sistemi-derbis-kullanici-sayisi>

<sup>2</sup> More information is available at <https://siviltoplum.gov.tr/derneklerin-faaliyet-alanlarina-gore-dagilimi>

<sup>3</sup> More information is available at [https://cdn.vgm.gov.tr/genelicerik/genelicerik\\_945\\_290519/001vakiflarin-turlerine-gore-dagilimi05082020.pdf](https://cdn.vgm.gov.tr/genelicerik/genelicerik_945_290519/001vakiflarin-turlerine-gore-dagilimi05082020.pdf)

or networking. The third group comprises business and industrial organizations, which work for the Turkish economy alongside the state and play a crucial role in enabling dialogue between the EU and Turkey. Hence, they are important for both democratic and economic development.

The EIDHR programme funds rights-based groups, engaged in “monitoring, lobbying and advocacy in the spheres of human rights and democratic development” (Axyonova and Bossuyt, 2016: 210). These organizations demand constitutional reforms and policy changes to promote an egalitarian society and resist the state’s violations regarding identities (gender, class, ethnicity, or human rights in general) and its anti-democratic practices. As local agents, their advocacy can induce social transformation, remind the state of its responsibilities regarding of pluralistic democracy, and guide political socialization. They are the legal organized version of Turkey’s grassroots movements, which have been active since they emerged from a culture of solidarity during the 1990s. After restrictions under the Law of Association were lifted, these loose groups gathered as organizations to gain legitimacy and become an addressee of the state. To sustain themselves as organizations, they applied for funding from the EU itself, EU member states’ embassies, and foundations in Turkey.

The EU has expanded its influence over these civil society organizations through “the increased interaction between local and European organizations, and various networking activities” (Ergun, 2010: 508), particularly through multi-partnered projects. By sponsoring several organizations from different fronts, the EU has followed “a neutral policy tool to be utilized for specific purposes within the accession process” (Ketola, 2012a: 97). Hence, the EU, as a donor-provider, aims to empower Turkish CSOs to both support democratic consolidation to replace the traditional political cleavages in a candidate country and prepare the country’s economy for market competitiveness. Paradoxically, however, while the EU secures the domain of neoliberalism by financing business groups for networks and other CSOs over social policy issues, it also endorses rights-based organizations trying to deal with the damage caused by neoliberalism, which constantly fuels inequality and injustice.

On the other hand, the EU funding priorities aims to professionalize civil organization by asking them to improve their organizational and administrative capacities. This can be seen in the EIDHR and IPA eligible applicant criteria, in which the beneficiaries have to be responsible for demonstrating effective and continuous links with that country’s economy, able to prepare and manage the action with their partners, to have stable and sufficient sources of finance to ensure the continuity of their organisation throughout the project and to play a part in financing it and to demonstrate their capacity to manage activities of a scale corresponding with the size of the project for which a grant is requested. For some

(Kurki, 2011b; Muhlenhoff, 2014; Luciani, 2021), by doing so, the EU has gradually depoliticized the rights-based CSOs in two ways. Firstly, right-based organizations only provide technical expertise to enable Turkey to match EU standards while following the projects' implementation criteria. Secondly, these project calls ask these organizations to change their activities from advocacy making to providing professional but provisional administrative skills, which promotes the marketization of civil society.

## **2. APPLYING A GRAMSCIAN LENS TO EU SPONSORSHIP OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

From a Gramscian perspective, civil society is an agent of reproduction and social transformation “in a realm in which the existing social order is grounded; and it can also be the realm in which a new social order can be founded” (Cox, 1999:4). In contrast to liberal accounts, the Gramscian view is that the state's hegemony is formed by a complex web of relations between political society (political elites), with its coercive apparatus, and civil society (hegemonic capitalist), linked to non-coercive tools to gain the citizens' consent (Dikici, 2009). It is not straightforward to convince the mass societies while raising their consciousness in a specific problem. Hence, civil society is “the locus where hegemony is disputed, as the dominant fundamental group seeks to extract consent” (David and Côte-Real Pinto, 2017: 311). Each hegemonic group has its own traditional intellectuals. These do not belong to any political sphere, rather, can become organic intellectuals, who “grow ‘organically’ with the dominant class (they are its educators, its judiciary etc.) and are instrumental in the production and maintenance of its hegemony” (Doyle, 2016: 407). Organic intellectuals are envoys that actively participate in everyday life “as an agent within the economic, political, social, and cultural fields acting as a constructor, organizer, and ‘permanent persuader’ in forming or contesting hegemony” (Gramsci, 1971: 9-10, Q12§3). They construct and maintain a new type of social order based on civil society, which comprises oppositional groups that are “radically autonomous, rhizomatic, multiple, heterogeneous and even prefigurative” (Fonseca, 2016: 119). Simultaneously, they attempt to forge a counter hegemony by connecting many different forms of struggle (Morton, 2007). Political society (governments) and bourgeoisie class within civil society constitute a hegemonic sphere “undergirding the modern ‘integral state’ or the modern historical bloc of liberal capitalism and modern democracy” (Fonseca, 2016: 104).

During Gramsci's time, to mitigate the disruptive potential of the working class, state leaders sought ways to establish alliances with employers to manage the economy. This new corporatism excluded those who were mostly unorganized subaltern groups but were barely considered as a part of civil society (Cox, 1999). Today, the intellectual war against states' unjust practices and capitalist outcomes

is conducted by rights-based civil society that express their counter ideology using the same strategies of the hegemonic power. Thus, in a Gramscian interpretation, these organizations, comprising financially weak but structurally strong and autonomous groups, is a site for counter-hegemony against the political society's anti-democratic acts and human rights violations. The role played by civil society intellectuals has an important larger ideological influence: their contribution to the formation of social groups, their solidarity with each other, and their role in sustaining counter hegemony (Gramsci, 2015) are all based on the idea of restructuring the society, constructing social consent, and transforming the self.

Regarding the EU's promotion of civil society through conditionality, which mainly operates in asymmetric power relations, the EU aims to transform candidate states' social, economic, and political realms to establish a new social order. As is clear from the types of project beneficiaries mentioned above, the EU finances both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic sites in a candidate country to consolidate liberal democracy in both the political arena and the market. This new public sphere of full civic engagement operates independently from the state while it also "questions both the frontiers of state and market power and the conflictual relations between economic and social integration" (David and Côte-Real Pinto, 2017: 310). As Ketola contends, EU's civil society policy, indeed, challenges the right-based organizations because they try to "find a balance between policy that is based largely on a liberal individualistic model, and their own experience that is at least partly tied in with particular group identities" (2011:790). Therefore, the EU as a neoliberal hegemonic project (Morton, 2007; Ketola, 2012b; Szedlacsek, 2017; Tansel, 2017) has anchored civil society in both democracy promotion and development paradigm based on liberalization for greater integration of the candidate country's economy into the global economy.

On the other hand, some scholars (Muehlenhoff, 2014; Zihnioğlu, 2019a; Luciani, 2021) stress that the EU's civil society policy actually supports non-governmental organizations' (NGOs), whereby the concept is used synonymous with civil society. NGOs have become a neoliberal form of civil society "characterised by a formal, institutionalised and professionalised structure, financial dependence on (Western) donors and an orientation towards their agendas rather than towards local claims or needs" (Luciani, 2021: 104). As Muehlenhoff (2014: 104) argues in more detail, civil society used to be considered a social movement based on the struggle over class, democracy, and human rights whereas the concept now refers more to a service provider rather than rights promoter:

When social movements ceased to exist, the industrialized countries found a new form of civil society that could coexist with the capitalist structures. The so-called neo-liberal concept defines civil society as the 'third sector' existing in addition to the

market and the state. The third sector mainly consists of NGOs. The third sector functions like the market while at the same time exercising functions formerly intrinsic to the state. The concept of a third sector is based on the neo-liberal assumption that the responsibilities of the state need to be reduced and privatized (Muehlenhoff, 2014: 104).

By promoting the “NGO-ification”, the EU aims to provide legitimacy from below and direct the citizens’ attention towards EU norms to gain public consent. However, by doing so, the EU asks states to devolve their social protection responsibilities onto these agents and stepped down their traditional role, while CSOs stepped into not only demand but deliver development (Zihnioğlu, 2019a). Because in European social welfare policies, there is a social contract where national insurance and pensions systems have proved to be fairly resilient to neoliberal retrenchment with a level of continuity (Morvaridi, 2013) and with the help of civil society. That is, a Europeanized civil society is expected to function both as a “necessary complement to the internal market and as a means to redress the underdevelopment of social policy at the EU level, an intriguing parallel with EU citizenship (Warleigh, 2001: 620).

### **3. EU’S CIVIL SOCIETY PROMOTION IN TURKEY: IDEOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL PILLARS**

The EU began providing systematic financial assistance to Turkey through civil society programmes in 2005. The variety of civil society organizations that have emerged since then indicates that some groups want to legitimize their public advocacy by gaining EU support while others want to contribute in line with the government’s policies. Indeed, the proliferation of civic engagement provides fertile ground for Europeanization. Nevertheless, it also marks “a turndown in EU-Turkey relations and growing disenchantment in both sides” (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber, 2016: 1). This is because the EU pragmatically strengthened organizations to further its interests and consolidate pro-EU campaigning (İçduygu, 2011) whereas AKP manipulated the EU reform packages as the “crucial tactical exercise of subsequent AKP governments” (Cebeci, 2016: 126) by using the apparatus of democratization to secure its incumbency. After AKP won absolute parliamentary majorities in the 2007 and 2011 elections, and passed the constitutional referendum in 2010, the government’s tone towards dissents became more authoritarian and less dependent on EU political conditionality (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber, 2016). In particular, the 2010 constitutional amendment, which was endorsed by some liberals in Turkey and welcomed by the EU as moving towards further democratisation, not only cemented the AKP’s power field but also broadened its control over the judicial system (Cebeci, 2016).

Regardless of this mutually pragmatic and twisted relationship between the EU and Turkey, in its first period (2007-2013), the EU allocated IPA I and EIDHR

funding to civil society organizations to facilitate their internationalization and enhance “the structuring of organized forms of civil society groups in a way similar to what has been happening in many other European countries” (Bee and Kaya, 2017: 310-311). According to CFCU data<sup>4</sup>, 39 project calls were announced in the first period of IPA I, of which only three categories directly targeted rights-driven issues: women rights, social inclusion of disabled people and children’s rights. The other calls were designed for professional and business organizations producing projects to implement the *acquis* chapters or to promote better EU-Turkey economic dialogue. Hence, the only schemes focusing on these three rights-based issues had small budgets. Of these three calls, one important detail is the use of “rights”, which referred within the context of the empowerment of disadvantaged groups in the labour market and designed to close the social policy gap through civil society’s training activities. For instance, projects call for the promotion and protection of women’s rights and enhancement of the social inclusion of people with disabilities schemes mostly focused on improving women and disabled people’s labour market participation through vocational training programs to develop their skills using entrepreneurship methods. Based on neoliberal rationalities, the call for tenders made professional and business organizations an integral part of the negotiation process and constituted service-based organizations as social policy providers (projects for children and disabled people). In addition, it reframed women’s rights within a market narrative by using terms like “economic empowerment” and “entrepreneurship”, which both increase the hierarchy between women groups.

Because the EU acknowledges that business organizations are networks focused on specific objectives (Commission of European Union, 2001), the Commission financially supports these groups as pro-European guards of Turkish capitalism. For high-level economic and business dialogue, these groups provide another source of pressure to encourage EU-related democratic reforms. They are also favourable partners for developing a well-functioning market economy in Turkey. Under AKP, both secular and Islamic business groups like MUSIAD have become prominent in using EU resources and trade opportunities within the European market (Yankaya, 2009). MUSIAD even follows AKP’s discourse emphasizing the compatibility of EU membership with the Islamic and democratic identity of Turkish society. (Kaya and Marchetti, 2014). As Kaya notes, the common feature of these business groups is that “they often benefit from their cooperation with the state, rather than from cooperation with other voluntary associations to pressure the state” (Kaya, 2016: 136).

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<sup>4</sup> More information is available at [http://www.cfcu.gov.tr/search-tenders-2?field\\_tender\\_status%5B%5D=7&field\\_tender\\_type%5B%5D=4&field\\_tender\\_ref\\_no=&search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=civil+society](http://www.cfcu.gov.tr/search-tenders-2?field_tender_status%5B%5D=7&field_tender_type%5B%5D=4&field_tender_ref_no=&search_api_views_fulltext=civil+society)

Table.1: IPA I Funding (2007-2013)

IPA I			
AMOUNT	NAME OF THE PROGRAMME (2007-2013)	NUMBER and TYPE OF THE PROJECTS	PRIORITIES
TOTAL BUDGET :1000.000 € TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2007- Strengthening Civil Society in the Pre-accession Process: NGO Grant Facility Component A4:STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS GRANT SCHEME	<b>16 Projects were funded:</b> 3 Street Children Projects 3 Education Projects 4 Child Labour Projects 5 Children's Rights Projects 1 Child Protection Project	*Awareness raising on the consequences and social effects of child labour and the need to prevent forced child labour. * Preparation of information on child labour for dissemination through media. * Raising awareness and education of the families of the children that are subject to forced child labour. * Increasing awareness on children's rights. * Strengthening participatory evaluation and impact assessment of existing system affecting the rights of children. * Provision of services to increase the welfare of children. * Promotion of collaboration between NGOs and Public sector on prevention of the forced child labour.
TOTAL BUDGET: 2400.000 € TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2007-Strengthening Civil Society in the Pre-accession Process: NGO Grant Facility Component A1:Promotion and Protection of Women's Right Grant Scheme	<b>28 Projects were funded</b> 7 Women empowerment 2 Women Rights 8 Women Employment 4 Women centre project 2 Women Entrepreneurship 3 Political participation 1 Refugee Women 1 Gender equal budgeting	*women's access to employment including such issues as unpaid family home-based working women etc., * difficulties that women face in starting up businesses and in accessing finance and training, * monitoring of and promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming on both local and national policy level, * full implementation of international and regional conventions related to women's rights to which Turkey is a party, * under-representation of women in political decision-making on both local and national levels. * development and implementation of awareness-raising activities in order to improve the understanding of issues related to gender equality, including gender based discrimination, * elimination of gender stereotypes in the media, education, science, arts, culture etc.
TOTAL BUDGET: 1000.000 € TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2007-Strengthening Civil Society in the Pre-accession Process: NGO Grant Facility Component A2:ENHANCEMENT OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES GRANT SCHEME	<b>21 Projects were funded:</b> 1 Disabled-Advocacy 1 Disabled Protection 10 Disabled Socialization 5 Disabled Education 1 Disabled Entrepreneurship 2 Disabled-Employment 1 Disabled Rights	* Developing new alternative community based services for people with disabilities diversified according to different types of disabilities (psychological physical or sensorial), * Improvement of physical independence, mobility and economic self sufficiency of people with disabilities, * Raising self-awareness of people with disabilities and encouraging the creation of organisations and networks made up by disabled people themselves. * Development and implementation of awareness-raising activities in order to improve the understanding of issues related to people with disability stigmatisation and discrimination, * Fight against stereotypes, discrimination and stigmatisation of people with disability in the media, education, working environment, etc., * Development and implementation of lobbying and advocacy activities addressing physical accessibility and effective

			participation of disabled people to social economic and cultural life.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 500.000 €</b> 45,32% OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 8 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2008-Strengthening Civil Society in Turkey: Integrated Approach to the Civil Society and the Participatory Local Projects	<b>8 out of 21 Projects are funded related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 4 Women Empowerment/Rights 3 Disabled Rights, 1 Children Rights	To facilitate the participation of local communities to the decision making processes of the solution of local problems and/or strengthen the cooperation with local authorities in dealing with the local management issues. Such as: - Rights of Children - Women's Rights (except the projects focusing on women's employment and income generating activities) - Disabled people rights - Cultural Rights of communities - Local Culture (only the projects aiming to prevent the extinction of the local cultural values, such as handicrafts, local cuisine etc.) - Environment
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 400.000 €</b> 46,90% OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 22 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2008-Local Mobilization for Participatory Democracy	<b>22 out of 47 Projects are funded related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 10 Women Empowerment-GBV 5 Child Labour 7 Disabled Socialization	Aware Raising; Promotion/ Public Relations and Networking; Constituency works in Gender, Environmental protection / nature conservation, Children rights, Disabled people rights, Youth, Human rights, Cultural rights & local cultures
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 3000.000 €</b> TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2010-Empowerment of Women and Women NGOs in the Least Developed Regions of Turkey (Southeastern Anatolia, Eastern Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia Regions)	<b>36 Projects were funded related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 12 Social Inclusion of Women 15 Women Empowerment/Employment 4 Gender Equality 2 Women Rights 1 Violence Against Women 1 Political Participation 1 Women and Technology	*improving women's access to all public services * enhancing women's social, economic and political status *eradicating of violations in human rights of women * awareness raising and capacity building to fight against gender discrimination and violations *supporting to strengthening organizational structure of women NGOs *promoting of establishment of new women NGOs *supporting to improvement of institutional and technical capacity of women NGOs
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :200.000 €</b> 44,90% OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 10 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2010-Empowering Civil Participation at Local Level	<b>10 out of 23 Projects were funded related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 4 Women Empowerment-GBV 1 Children Rights 1 Human Rights 2 Disabled Rights 1 Minority Rights 1 LGBTI+ Rights	Civil participation in decision making mechanisms Awareness-raising Civil dialogue
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :800.000 €</b> TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2010- Developing Civil Dialogue among NGO's	<b>23 Projects were funded related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 4 Women Empowerment-GBV 7 Children Rights 1 Human Rights 8 Disabled Rights 1 Minority Rights 2 Refugees	Rights of Children; Gender Equality and Women's Rights; Rights of people with disabilities; Human Rights (Enhancing freedom of expression, Promotion of refugee rights -including asylum seekers-, Prevention of discrimination against minorities, ethnical and cultural groups)
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :78.505 €</b> 18,87% OF THE BUDGET WAS	2011-Civil Society Dialogue-II:Micro Grant (Second Call)	<b>3 out of 16 Projects were related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 1 Women empowerment	Aware Raising; Promotion/ Public Relations and Networking; Constituency works

ALLOCATED TO 3 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS		1 Disabled social inclusion 1 Children Protection	
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :2.970.000 €</b> TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2012- Strengthening Capacity of National and Local NGOs on Combating Violence Against Women Grant Scheme	<b>20 Projects were funded related to Violence Against Violence</b>	The purpose of the “Women’s Shelters for Combating Domestic Violence” (2009) project is to ensure that women are provided with sufficient protection against violence in 24 cities through establishing and/or providing support services for women subjected to violence/domestic violence. *To support capacity building of local and national NGOs on combating VAW. The projects under this Call for Proposals should be designed to contribute to the strengthening of NGO capacity on combating VAW, foster networking among NGOs and promote partnerships and support partnership with local authorities that offers services for women.

In contrast to IPA funding and its Civil Society Facility programmes, EIDHR funds awareness-raising, advocacy, and policy-making projects. The projects are carried out by the addressee organizations, which have mostly developed from grassroots movements, and the stakeholders. During 2007-2013, the European Delegation announced six calls for tenders, with 81 projects funded in total. EIDHR ties together the projects’ common themes based on raising awareness about freedom of expression and freedom of association, LGBTI rights, women’s rights and their participation in decision-making mechanisms, combatting discrimination, social inclusion of youth, social justice for internally displaced people (IDPs), democratization training for educators, protecting undocumented people, reporting breaches in the implementation of the penal code, research into media hate speech, and protecting the rights of cultural minorities (Roma, Alevis, Kurds, Jews, Greeks, Armenians) against hate crimes. The main methods of these projects are research, monitoring, reporting, training, and awareness-raising.

**Table.2: EIDHR Funding (2007-2013)**

AMOUNT (EURO)	NAME OF THE PROGRAMME (2007-2013)	NUMBER and TYPE OF THE PROJECTS	PRIORITIES
<b>Total Budget: 385,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %80-90</b>	European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) - Turkey 2006 Micro-Project Programme	<b>7 projects were funded.</b> 3 Women Rights 2 Disability Rights 1 Minority Rights 1 Citizenship/Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening civil society organisations in monitoring and advocacy of citizens’ rights, in particular the rights of vulnerable groups (such as women, children, disabled, internally displaced, etc.) and the furtherance of related international instruments;</li> <li>• Reducing the occurrence of torture and ill-treatment, promoting the effective implementation of international instruments against torture and the fight against impunity;</li> <li>• Enhancing education, training, monitoring and awareness-raising on human rights and democratisation issues, in particular the promotion of respect for human rights in education, local and public administration and</li> </ul>

			<p>media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing equal rights and treatment of persons and people belonging to minorities irrespective of racial, or ethnic origin, or of language and religion, including fight against discrimination;</li> <li>• Promoting cultural rights, cultural diversity and respect for minorities, including strengthening inter-cultural understanding and reinforcing engagement of civil society in the promotion of a <u>culture of dialogue and conflict resolution</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>Total Budget: 1,164,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %64-80</b></p>	<p>2007-2008 European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Turkey Programme</p>	<p><b>13 projects were funded.</b>                  2 Freedom of Expression                  2 Social Inclusion                  2 Anti-Discrimination                  1 Active Citizenship (IDP)                  1 Minority Rights                  1 Human Rights of Prisoners                  1 Consolidating Secularism                  1 Social Inclusion of Disabled                  1 Human Rights Education                  1 Freedom of Association</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* freedom of association and peaceful assembly</li> <li>*freedom of conscience, religion or belief</li> <li>*right to freedom from torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment</li> <li>*democratic participation and good governance based on principles of equity, transparency, accountability and rule of law</li> <li>*rights of the child (particularly justice for children in conflict with the law)</li> <li>*elimination of violence against women</li> <li>*cultural rights</li> <li>*social rights of vulnerable groups (including but not limited to internally displaced persons and Roma)</li> <li>*rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants</li> <li>*<u>freedom of expression and freedom of the press</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>Total Budget: 1,600,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %72-90</b></p>	<p>European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Turkey Programme Restricted Call for Proposals 2009</p>	<p><b>15 projects were funded.</b>                  1 Social Justice                  1 Freedom of Assembly                  2 Minority Rights                  1 Children Rights                  2 Violence Against Women                  1 Human Rights of Sex Workers                  1 LGBTI+ Rights                  1 Aware Raising on HIV/AIDS                  2 Advocacy Making of CSOs                  2 Refugee Rights                  1 Hate Crimes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*freedoms of expression, conscience, religion, press, assembly and association;</li> <li>*access to justice, right to fair trial and due process, human rights in prisons;</li> <li>*prevention of torture and ill-treatment, fight against impunity;</li> <li>*anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, cultural rights, minority rights;</li> <li>* rights of children (particularly in areas of children in conflict with the law, violence against children and child labour);</li> <li>*violence against women</li> <li>*social rights (including but not limited to trade union rights, right to education, health and housing).</li> <li>* actions for the protection of defenders;</li> <li>* enhancing technical knowledge and skills of human rights defenders</li> <li>* strengthening capacities of human rights defenders organisations for carrying out their activities, including but not limited to documenting violations, seeking remedies for victims of human rights violations, fighting against impunity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Total Budget: 1,200,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %66-95</b></p>	<p>European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Turkey Programme Restricted Call for Proposals 2010</p>	<p><b>10 projects were funded.</b>                  1 Youth Human Rights                  3 LGBTI+ Rights                  2 Women Rights                  2 Refugee- Migration Protection                  1 Democratization                  1 Freedom of Religion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*freedoms of expression, conscience, religion, press, assembly and association;</li> <li>*access to justice, right to fair trial and due process, human rights in prisons;</li> <li>*prevention of torture and ill-treatment, fight against impunity;</li> <li>*anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, cultural rights, minority rights;</li> <li>* rights of children (particularly in areas of children in conflict with the law, violence against children and child labour);</li> <li>*violence against women</li> <li>*social rights (including but not limited to trade union rights, right to education, health and housing).</li> <li>* actions for the protection of defenders;</li> <li>* enhancing technical knowledge and skills of human rights defenders</li> <li>* strengthening capacities of human rights defenders organisations for carrying out their activities, including but not limited to documenting violations, seeking remedies for</li> </ul>

			victims of human rights violations, fighting against impunity.
<b>Total Budget: 3,000,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %77-95</b>	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme Turkey Programme Restricted Call for Proposals 2011	<b>23 Projects were funded.</b> 2 Minority Rights 2 Democratic Rights of Kurds 1 Strengthening the Human Rights Defenders 1 Child Protection 2 Refugee Rights 3 Women Empowerment 1 Human Rights Education 3 Freedom of Religion 2 Violence Against Women 2 Monitoring Capacity of the CSOs 1 Women Solidarity 1 Advocacy Making 1 Disabled Rights	*freedoms of expression, conscience, religion, press, assembly and association; *access to justice, right to fair trial and due process, human rights in prisons; *prevention of torture and ill-treatment, fight against impunity; *anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, cultural rights, minority rights; * rights of children (particularly in areas of children in conflict with the law, violence against children and child labour); *violence against women *social rights (including but not limited to trade union rights, right to education, health and housing). * actions for the protection of defenders; * enhancing technical knowledge and skills of human rights defenders * strengthening capacities of human rights defenders organisations for carrying out their activities, including but not limited to documenting violations, seeking remedies for victims of human rights violations, fighting against impunity.

EIDHR sponsorship facilitates advocacy CSOs' networking with their EU counterparts and also teaches them how to form "capacity- building, expansion of activities, professionalization and the diffusion of project culture" (Rumelili and Boşnak, 2015: 136). Here, İçduygu contends, Turkish CSOs that became "highly politicised or critical of the state were able to receive an overwhelming share of EU assistance" (2011:389). However, while EIDHR supports these rights-based groups' activities, it also trains them to be "providers of administrative, social and legal advice and services" (Mühlenhoff, 2014: 103) and asks them to undertake the bureaucratic burdens of project procedures. By doing so, civil society is assigned to check the state as an effective producer of change and "is seen as self-reliant, risk-taker, entrepreneur, and innovator, who has no need for dependency relations with funders or state support and who take responsibility for finding and adapting themselves to the market opportunities" (Kurki, 2011a: 357). According to Kurki, "the EU has been seeking to carve out a distinct space for itself in this policy field" (Kurki, 2011b: 1574) through financing these organizations by EIDHR programme. That is, its normative agenda has become a technical and instrumental policy.

Hence, EIDHR funding during 2007-2013 have revealed three notable problems almost in all projects. Firstly, instead of improving the individuals' existing rights, the EU introduced a problem-solving mechanism for rights-based organizations. This was despite it being the government's duty under the political criteria to prevent or resolve human rights breaches whereas CSOs are only responsible for framing and consulting regarding such problems. Secondly, advocacy conducted locally does not contribute to improving the central authority. The voices of local organizations leave no room for their cooperation

with the state's practices because they are not fully empowered actors in decision-making processes (Bee and Kaya, 2017). Thirdly, CSOs entered a competitive vacuum that diminished the value of their solidarity to gain EIDHR financial assistance. They are forced to compete for this limited funding with logic-requiring entrepreneurial ability.

#### **4. THE PATHS THAT LED TO THE GEZI UPRISING AND BURGEONING OF ALTERNATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

In parallel with the financial benefits to civil society, years between 2007 and 2013 were also the period when AKP became associated with democratic backsliding and turned into an Islamic-conservative imaginary, “[a]fter gaining sufficient power in the state as well as increasing its electoral support” (Özen, 2015: 538). Turkish politics under AKP rule has become more interventionist in the judicial system, education, personal preferences, and the media. These interventions represent a majoritarian drift, ‘subtle government violence’, and ‘authoritarian tendencies or neoliberal authoritarianism (Gürcan and Peker, 2014; Cebeci, 2016; Gençoğlu-Onbaşı, 2016; Altınörs and Akçay, 2022). On the other hand, AKP’s social policies for the working class favour their growing Muslim bourgeoisie. This established an Islamic neoliberal power bloc that culturally consolidates “paternalistic labour relationships, conservative trade unionism, religious-clientelist aid networks, and other ideological state apparatuses” (Gürcan and Peker, 2015: 325). That is, AKP’s implementation of neoliberal economic policies adjusted to an Islamist ideology has become a social engineering project that aims to transform society’s common sense (Gürcan and Peker, 2014).

The Gezi Park protests during May and June of 2013 erupted in response to the government’s political-economic and political-cultural interventions, growing public unrest regarding Turkey’s undemocratic turn, and deepening polarization due to the government’s attitude towards non-AKP voters. The protests were first started by environmentalists to preserve Gezi Park in Taksim Square, Istanbul. However, they became a form of collective resistance after the police, under government orders, used disproportionate violence against the protestors. Another factor was the AKP government’s “encroachments on urban public spaces without paying any attention to the advice of city planners and architects or allowing any public debate on these projects” (Gençoğlu-Onbaşı, 2016: 276), which “led to the construction of a pluralist collective body in the occupied spaces” (Bilgiç, 2018: 267).

As a counter-hegemonic political struggle, the protests became one of the most important anti-government movements in Turkey’s political history (Yalçın, 2015; Gençoğlu-Onbaşı, 2016) by unleashing “a new critical social consciousness against anti-democratic extremes of those in power” (Saatçioğlu, 2015: 268). The

protests also profoundly influenced the involvement of rights-based CSOs as they had already used EU financial assistance to increase their advocacy scope and visibility. Despite government's efforts to demobilize the protestors by police force, new types of alliances, such as forums demanding more inclusive governance, were rapidly established to provide a non-commodified space (Akçali, 2018). This new counter hegemonic space crystallized the resistance of rights-based organizations, marginalized groups, the young generations, and ordinary people against state pressure.

The increase in police violence and the Prime Minister Erdoğan's intolerance of the protestors prompted EU leaders to condemn the government's practices. For example, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle<sup>5</sup>, and EU Foreign Policy Chief, Catherine Ashton<sup>6</sup>, both expressed their deep concern regarding excessive police force against the protestors and their democratic demands. In a resolution on 13 June, 2013, the European Parliament criticized AKP's distancing from EU norms, such as freedom of assembly, the press, and democracy.<sup>7</sup> Disregarding the EU's criticisms, AKP started holding demonstrations, using a new discursive tool of the so-called 'national will' to further polarize society, reproduce consent for "the formulation of a neo-Ottomanist ideology (addressing democratic crises) and an extensive neoliberal restructuring of the economy (addressing economic crises)" (Bilgiç, 2018: 265-266).

Regarding EU support for CSOs during this process, the IPA call in 2013 aimed to improve their political contribution by specifically referring to fundamental rights. In total, 39 projects were funded in relation to democratic participation of youth and women, transparency and accountability of the government and the role of CSOs, Women's Rights and the fight against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, the Rights of the Elderly, Children's Rights, Disability Rights, and a limited fund for Media Ethics and Minorities. Yet, instead of sponsoring those rights-based CSOs that had tackled the ill-functioning mechanism of the political criteria during the Gezi protests, the EU again prioritized projects that did not challenge the government's human rights violations, including during the protests. In contrast, EIDHR's 2013 financial assistance was more promising as it funded 22 projects related to human rights and consolidation of democracy, gender equality (women's rights and LGBTI rights), enhancing dialogue for human rights promotion, cultural and educational rights (Kurdish education), protection of refugees, anti-discrimination, Roma rights, functioning of the rule of law, and media freedoms.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information please see Füle, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Please also see Reuters, 2013, 12 June.

<sup>7</sup> Available at European Parliament, 2013, 13 June.

**Table.3: IPA I & EIDHR Funds 2013**

AMOUNT	NAME OF THE PROGRAMME	NUMBER and TYPE OF THE PROJECTS	PRIORITIES
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 1000.000 €</b> 77.80% OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 18 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2013- Developing Civil Dialogue among CSOs – II (DCD-II)	<b>18 out of 28 projects were funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 9 Women Empowerment/Rights 3 Child Labour and Rights 3 Refugee Protection 2 Disabled Protection/Rights 1 LGBTI+ Rights	To contribute to the establishment of cooperative and collective actions among CSOs (partnerships, networks, platforms, etc.) in order to strengthen their roles as effective claimants of democratic rights and freedoms and bolster their organizational and operational capacities in their main thematic areas of action.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 6.150.000 €</b> TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	2013-Civil Society Dialogue III - Political Criteria Grant Scheme	<b>39 projects were funded related to human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 8 Women Rights and Against Violence 5 Children Rights Education and Protection 4 Disabled Employment and Anti-Discrimination 5 Democratic Dialogue and Participation 4 Youth Democratic Participation and Rights 3 Minority Rights and Cultural Heritage 3 Human Rights 2 Justice 2 Transparency 2 Elder Care 1 Refugee Protection	<u>Human Rights</u> : Awareness-raising on human rights; Human rights of refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants <u>Anti-Discrimination</u> : Socially vulnerable groups; Freedom of expression; Dialogue among cultures, religions and beliefs <u>Democracy and Rule of Law</u> : Political culture/democratic participation; Justice system including access to justice
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 1750.000 €</b> TOTAL BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO THE BENEFICIARIES	Civil Society Facility Turkey Programme: Sivil düşün AB Programı	<b>6 Projects were funded related to Democratic participation and civil society.</b> 1 Youth Participation 1 Disaster Respond 1 Freedom of Press 2 LGBTI+ Rights 1 Active Citizenship	To contribute to the strengthening of capacities of existing or new national, regional (in the sense of regions within Turkey), local and/or thematic platforms and networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to give citizens a voice and influence public sector reform processes through their activities.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET: 2,000,000 (EUR)</b> The EU covers approx. %57-95	EIDHR 2012 & 2013 Country Based Support Scheme Restricted Call for Proposals	<b>13 Projects were funded.</b> 2 Women Rights 2 LGBTI+ Rights 1 Violence Against Women 1 Human Rights Defenders 1 Refugee Protection 1 Human Rights & Art 1 Human Rights of Prisoners 1 Capacity Building of CSOs 1 Protection of human rights in post-disaster situations 2 Minority Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• freedom of expression, conscience, religion, media, assembly and association;</li> <li>• access to justice, right to fair trial and due process, human rights in prisons;</li> <li>• prevention of torture and ill-treatment;</li> <li>• fight against impunity for any human rights violation;</li> <li>• anti-discrimination (including LGBTI+ rights, people with disabilities), cultural rights, minority rights;</li> <li>• migrants &amp; asylum seekers;</li> <li>• rights of children (particularly in areas of children in conflict with the law, violence against children and child labour);</li> <li>• women rights, violence against women;</li> <li>• social rights and equal opportunities (including but not limited to women rights, trade union rights, right to education, health and housing);</li> <li>• Protection of human rights in post-disaster situations.</li> </ul>

In addition to funding for civil society and civic participation, the EU Delegation also established its ‘Sivil Düşün’ (Think Civil) programme in 2013,

which supports rights-based CSOs through aid-in-kind rather than money. This system is more flexible, comprehensive, and rapid in meeting the needs of CSOs. The programme's main aims are increasing the visibility of these organizations, supporting their lobbying and campaigning activities, and giving them a corporate identity. The programme, indeed, indirectly endorses counter-hegemonic activities in light of their collective demands and enshrines their significance in society. However, the budget is still very limited and restricts right-based organizations' activities to their locality.

## **5. CRIMINALIZATION OF DISSENT AND EU SUPPORT OF CSOS IN THE POST-GEZI PROCESS**

In the aftermath of the Gezi protests, the government intensified its 'national will' narrative and AKP's ideological hegemony nationwide (Bilgiç, 2018). Erdoğan's majoritarian conception of democracy underpins his efforts to divide the protestors and their conservative counterparts. EU-Turkey relations have been shaken by Erdoğan's strong criticism of Western countries and his claims that these countries had endorsed Gezi protests as part of the so-called 'interest lobby'. The post-Gezi process demonstrates that the EU's democracy promotion in Turkey has failed, with a rift over Turkey's commitment to the political criteria, de-democratization, and its discursive repertoire. These issues became much worse following the failed coup attempt in 2016 by AKP's former ally, the Gülen Movement. In response, the government declared a state of emergency to prevent the movement launching any further insurrection or creating a parallel state. In the following two years, the AKP government established a new regime without checks and balances (Altınörs and Aydın, 2022) in which it gained control over all the mainstream media and the judicial system while taking powers to repress all opposition groups. By controlling the decision-making authority, AKP has been able to gain economic and political consent (Bilgiç, 2018) whereby the government can justify its coercive and violent practices as necessary for the survival of the state. This new system confines active citizenship within a monolithic unique culture and identity whereby citizens are reproduced as passive actors obliged to perform a prescribed set of duties (Bee and Kaya, 2017).

Nevertheless, drawing on the Gezi spirit, post-Gezi activism has become a larger opposition movement beyond environmental concerns. Forums, as counter-hegemonic actor constellations, occasionally gather and have "protested the government's intrusive practices, with its lack of respect for diverse lifestyles and more broadly democratic rights and individual freedoms" (Zihnioğlu, 2019b:11). Because of ideological diversity among opposition groups, this activism has not yet been converted into a mainstream political movement or party. However, their collective reactions were clearly expressed in 2014 at the funeral of 15-years-old Berkin Elvan, who was shot by the police during the Gezi protests, and after the

Soma mine accident, and during the 2015 general elections through volunteer-led 'Vote and Beyond' solidarity. Moreover, Yoğurtçu Park Woman Platform still continues its network with other women organizations, which are always prominent International Women's Day on 8 March. They also cooperate with other organizations like the LGBTI+ movement, which became more visible during the protests and has maintained its Pride Parade march with the support of Gezi protest groups.

This dissident milieu is a deliberative platform comprising social identities that are currently excluded by the current configuration of hegemony (neoliberal-conservative) and open to be articulated into different historico-discursive formations (Gençoğlu-Onbaşı, 2016). The forums are a particularly good example of the Gramscian logic of alliance, which brings different groups together in spaces of resistance. This independent space reproduces social relations between diverse subjectivities and "makes it possible to account for social struggles within and amongst contemporary civil societies...[that]...challenge the hegemonic order" (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2016:15). Given that these forums and their connections with rights-based organizations are indeed the new democratic stakeholders, it is possible to expect that the EU should take them as an addressee and strengthen their contribution for the implementation of political criteria. Because these groups are non-profit and were marginalized by the AKP government during the state of emergency, and they can only survive with external funding. Unfortunately, however, "the development of a properly functioning governance system where organizations are all independent and can play a key role, using their voices in policy making, seems unrealistic in the present state" (Bee and Chrona, 2017: 173).

The post-Gezi period has also coincided with the Syrian refugee crisis that erupted in 2015, which has revived the damaged EU-Turkey relationship because the EU insisted on Turkey's cooperation in reducing the number of Syrian refugees entering the EU through Turkey (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber, 2016). Accordingly, the EU indicated new priorities regarding funding calls for 2014-2020 for CSOs that are either dependent to public and IPA funding or independent CSOs financed by EIDHR. The EU specifically noted how their contributions are significant in the EU-Turkey dialogue, particularly in terms of protection and socialization of the refugees.

#### **Table.4: IPA II Funding (2014-2020)**

AMOUNT (EURO)	NAME OF THE PROGRAMME (2014-2020)	NUMBER and TYPE OF THE PROJECTS	PRIORITIES
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :1000.000 €</b>	Civil Society Facility Turkey Programme II: Sivil düşün AB Programı	<b>3 Projects were funded.</b> 1 Violence Against Women 1 Human Rights of Prisoners 1 Children Rights	To the strengthening of capacities of existing or new national, regional (in the sense of regions within Turkey), local and/or thematic platforms and networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to give citizens a voice and influence public sector reform processes through their activities
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :1000.000 €</b>	2015-Civil Society Dialogue between EU and Turkey - IV Justice, Freedom and Security Grant Scheme	<b>9 Projects were funded related to Refugees.</b> 7 Refugee Rights-Protection and Service Delivery (Children and Women) 1 Refugee Children Rights 1 Refugee Women Trafficking	*To achieve a high level of mutual understanding between all sectors of civil society in Turkey and in the EU Member States, including the implications of Turkey's EU membership. *establishment of strong links and a high level cooperation between civil society in Turkey and the EU Member States through civil society dialogue in the area of justice, freedom and security where civil society dialogue is particularly valuable for Turkey's successful accession to the EU.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :1.750.000 €</b> 18,87% OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 6 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2017- Grant Scheme for Grassroots Civil Society Organizations (GRS)	<b>6 out of 38 projects were funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 1 Employment of Disabled People 1 Disabled Protection 1 Disabled Advocacy 1 Women Entrepreneurship 1 Business Women/Leadership 1 Gender Equality at Work	*To strengthen the capacity of grassroots CSOs for active democratic participation in policy and decision making processes. *To improve the administrative, advocacy and communication skills of grassroots CSOs so that they can participate more effectively in the policy dialogue (Policy dialogues seek to exchange information and build consensus recommendations between the public, private and civic sectors to make decisions, or strongly influence the trajectory of a possible solution to a challenging issue. • bring diverse interest groups to the table, • focus on a regulatory, policy, or planning issue that is of common interest, • have a life cycle with a beginning, middle, and end, and • seek to formulate practical solutions to complex problems)
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :2500.000 €</b> 60% OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 6 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2017-CSO Partnerships and Networks on Strengthening Cooperation Between Public Sector and CSOs Grant Scheme (CSPN)	<b>6 out of 10 projects were funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 1 Democratic Governance 1 Strengthening Women CSOs 2 Disabled Protection/Socialization 1 Minority Right/Dialogue 1 Women Business Network	*To support the development of civil society through more active democratic participation in policy and decision making processes. *To strengthen the capacities of and networking among organised active citizens / CSOs and the cooperation between public sector and CSOs.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET :6000.000 €</b> 30 % OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 11 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS	2018- Supporting Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V)	<b>11 out of 40 projects were funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 1 Freedom of Belief 1 Disadvantage Groups 1 Women Entrepreneurship 2 Children Rights 2 Disabled Socialization 1 Women in Business 3 Refugee Projects (Women-Children-Integration)	• Long term cooperation at local, regional and national levels between Turkish CSOs with European counterparts on areas within the scope of EU acquis and policies, • Influencing the general public opinion on importance and benefits of membership of Turkey to the EU within Turkey and EU, • Deepening and sustaining dialogue between Turkish CSOs with European counterparts established under EU financial assistance and other community programmes.

<p><b>TOTAL BUDGET :3000.000 €</b> 34 % OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 8 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS</p>	<p>2018-Grant Scheme for Civil Society Support II (CSP II)</p>	<p><b>8 out of 31 projects were funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 4 Women empowerment/ Entrepreneurship/ Democratic Participation 2 Minority Rights 1 Refugee Integration 1 Disabled Empowerment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to increase administrative and financial sustainability of CSOs;</li> <li>• to increase the communication and advocacy skills of CSOs;</li> <li>• to promote active citizenship and/or participation of CSOs to decision-making processes at local, national or international levels;</li> <li>• to strengthen the transparency and accountability of CSOs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TOTAL BUDGET :3000.000 €</b> 43 % OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 14 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS</p>	<p>2019-Grant Scheme for Civil Society Support Programme - III</p>	<p><b>14 out of 34 projects are funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 3 Women political participation/ Media and gender equality 5 Child Protection/ Participation/Disability 5 Disabled Protection/Social Inclusion/Awareness/ Rights 1 Minority Rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve organisational and institutional capacities of CSOs and encourage partnership among CSOs;</li> <li>• To promote active citizenship and/or participation of CSOs to decision-making processes at local, national or international levels</li> <li>• To support the improvement of the legislative environment for active citizenship.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TOTAL BUDGET :4500.000 €</b> 34.54 % OF THE BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO 14 RIGHT-BASED PROJECTS</p>	<p>2019- Supporting Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey Grant Scheme (CSD-VI)</p>	<p><b>11 out of 33 projects were funded related human rights and democracy subjects.</b> 6 Social Inclusion/ Protection and Rights of Disabled People 2 Women Employment and Empowerment 1 Social Inclusion of Children in Prison 1 Minority Rights 1 Migrant Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing long term sustainable cooperation at local, regional and national levels between CSOs in Turkey and their European counterparts on areas within the scope of EU acquis and policies,</li> <li>• Influencing the general public opinion within Turkey and EU on importance, positive effects and benefits of membership of Turkey to the EU,</li> <li>• Further strengthening of dialogue between CSOs in Turkey with European counterparts established under previous EU financial assistance and other EU programmes, including CSD interventions.</li> </ul>

**Table.5: EIDHR Funding (2014-2020)**

AMOUNT (EURO)	NAME OF THE PROGRAMME (2014-2020)	NUMBER and TYPE OF THE PROJECTS	PRIORITIES
<p>Total Budget: 3,000,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %85-95</p>	<p>2014- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) Turkey Programme</p>	<p><b>22 Projects were funded.</b> 3 Women Rights/ Protection 5 Minority Rights 1 Democracy Promotion 2 Anti-Discrimination 1 Gender-based monitoring 1 Fighting against Torture 1 Human Rights Defenders 1 Child Education on Environment 1 Media and Human Rights 1 Rights of Prisoners 2 Violence against Women 1 LGBTI+ Rights 1 Refugee Rights/ Protection 1 Human Rights Recording</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• freedom of expression, conscience, religion, media, assembly and association;</li> <li>• access to justice, right to fair trial and due process;</li> <li>• human rights in prisons;</li> <li>• prevention of torture and ill-treatment;</li> <li>• fight against impunity;</li> <li>• anti-discrimination, cultural rights, minority rights;</li> <li>• migrants, refugees &amp; asylum seekers;</li> <li>• rights of children;</li> <li>• women rights, LGBTI rights, gender based violence;</li> <li>• social rights and equal opportunities (including but not limited to people with disabilities, trade union rights, right to education, health, housing, environment).</li> <li>• actions for the protection of defenders;</li> <li>• enhancing technical knowledge and skills of human rights defenders;</li> <li>• strengthening capacities of human rights defenders organisations for carrying out their activities, including but not limited to monitoring and documenting violations, seeking remedies for victims of human rights violations, fighting against impunity;</li> <li>• strengthening capacities of human rights defenders to operate in post-disaster situations</li> </ul>
<p>Total Budget: 5,000,000 (EUR) The EU covers</p>	<p>2016-European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights</p>	<p><b>23 Projects were funded.</b> 2 Minority Rights 2 LGBTI+ Rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect the principle of non-refoulement;</li> <li>• provision of psychosocial support;</li> <li>• rights of children;</li> <li>• access to justice and legal counsel/aid, right to fair</li> </ul>

approx. %85-95 <b>(Half of the Budget transferred to Refugee Projects)</b>	Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) Turkey Programme	2 Children Rights (Post-Conflict) 1 Reinforcing Human Rights Defenders (Post-Conflict) 1 Fundamental Rights Education 1 Environmental Activism 1 Human Rights of Prisoners 1 Freedom of Expression 1 Anti-Discrimination 1 Disabled Rights 1 Human Rights and Art 9 Refugee Rights	trial and due process; • prevention of torture and ill-treatment; • social rights and equal opportunities (including but not limited to people with disabilities, right to education, health, housing, employment).
Total Budget: 2,900,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %75-95	2017-European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) Turkey Programme	<b>18 Project were funded.</b> 4 Protecting Human Rights Defenders 3 Rights-Based Journalism 1 Youth Solidarity 1 Children Rights 1 Accountability and Human Rights 1 Equal Rights 1 Social Rights of IDP 1 Access to Justice 1 Women's Political Participation 2 Gender-based Violence 1 Freedom of Expression 1 Refugee Rights/Protection	• women rights, gender based violence; • LGBTI rights; • prevention of torture and ill-treatment; • freedom of expression, conscience, religion, media, assembly and association; • access to justice, right to fair trial and due process; • rights of children; • improvement of prison system and human rights in prisons; • fight against impunity; • anti-discrimination, cultural rights, minority rights; • rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; • social rights and equal opportunities (including but not limited to people with disabilities, trade union rights, right to education, health, housing, environment). • actions for the protection of defenders; • enhancing technical knowledge and skills of human rights defenders; • strengthening capacities of human rights defenders organisations for carrying out their activities, including but not limited to monitoring and documenting violations, seeking remedies for victims of human rights violations, fighting against impunity; • strengthening capacities of human rights defenders to operate in post-disaster situations
Total Budget: 3,100,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %88-95 <b>(Half of the Budget transferred to Refugee Projects)</b>	2019-European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Turkey Programme	<b>8 Projects were funded.</b> 1 Freedoms of Expression, Media, Association and Assembly. 2 Refugee Rights/Protection 1 Disabled Rights 1 Women Rights 1 Access to Justice 1 LGBTI+ Rights 1 Monitoring Human Rights	• women rights, gender based violence; • LGBTI rights; • prevention of torture and ill-treatment; • freedom of expression, conscience, religion, media, assembly and association; • access to justice, right to fair trial and due process; • rights of children; • improvement of prison system and human rights in prisons; • fight against impunity; • anti-discrimination, cultural rights, minority rights; • rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; • social rights and equal opportunities (including but not limited to people with disabilities, trade union rights, right to education, health, housing, environment).
Total Budget: 3,200,000 (EUR) The EU covers approx. %88-95	2020-European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) Turkey Programme	<b>7 Projects were funded.</b> 2 Protecting Human Rights Defenders 2 Refugee Rights/Protection 1 Accountability and Human Rights 1 Justice for Disadvantaged Groups 1 Journalism and Freedom	• women's rights, gender-based violence, LGBTI rights; • access to justice, right to fair trial and due process, fight against impunity; • prevention of torture and ill-treatment; • improvement of prison system and human rights in prisons; • freedom of expression; • freedom of religion or belief; • freedom of assembly and freedom of association; • rights of children; • non-discrimination, minority rights.

Hence, EU's IPA II and EIDHR funds since the Gezi protests indicates that the EU has become partially alienated from Turkish rights-based CSOs. This is not because the Turkish government labelled many of them as terrorists but rather that the refugee crisis has turned EU sponsorship into a thematic call whereby most projects need to add a 'refugee' dimension to their rationale. IPA II followed a similar approach to IPA I's call and beneficiary categories by re-funding service-based, business, and professional organizations under the titles of disability, women in business (women entrepreneurship), and children's rights by adding a refugee priority. Meanwhile, EIDHR's budget rose from 9.349 million € (2006-2013) to 17.200 million € (2014-2020) while the number of projects fell, of which almost half relate to refugee protection and related outreach programmes. The five calls of the EIDHR programme sponsored 78 projects of which just 15 directly relate to refugee protection while accounting for over half of the general budget.

The EU's project calls have prioritized the refugee crisis by side-lining Turkey's human right organizations, which have become government targets within its growing authoritarian sphere. By demanding that these organizations to conduct refugee projects instead of solving structural human rights violations and preventing de-democratization, the EU has converted these organizations into a third sector under its hegemony and manipulated them as subjects of the unsolved refugee flow issue affecting EU-Turkey relations. Rights-based organizations in Turkey are typically marginalized both because of their weak infrastructure and resources and their constant resistance against state's ideology. It seems the EU has been "hesitant about developing close relationships with certain CSOs, thereby opening itself up to accusations of bias" (İçduygu, 2011: 390). That is true, as the EU has, whether intentionally or not, fuelled the AKP's strategy of silencing rights-based CSOs whereby "civil society participation in policy-making, conflict resolution or democratic monitoring have been undermined, while civil society in service-provision fulfilling the gap left by the state has expanded considerably" (Yabancı, 2019: 289).

To sum up, regarding IPA I, IPA II and EIDHR beneficiaries between 2007 and 2020, there has been a proliferation of all types of organization trying to win EU financial assistance since Turkey's adoption of the amended Association Law. The rise of these organizations, which lack democratic motivation, has led to unsustainable associationization that has turned civil society into a sector and degraded the essential meaning and significance of civil organizing. Indeed, associationization, which is largely driven by AKP-promoted organizations, has "resulted in the retreat of state, curbing both the state's unproductive involvement in the economy and its non-democratic impulses" (Tansel, 2015: 572). Associationization also involves transforming the working style of these organizations into "pragmatic strategies with a strong employment focus, rather

than the establishment of a new democratic counterculture” (Bagic, 2004: 222). Thus, both Turkish government and the EU itself have weakened the policy-producing and political socialization of rights-based CSOs, which expanded after the Gezi protests before being forcibly depoliticized and rendered dysfunctional since then.

## 6. CONCLUSION

During Turkey’s process of EU accession, the EU has emphasized that civil society is an essential component of democratization, with rights-based CSOs being the ideal groups to promote democracy. In fact, however, the accession process has enabled many service provider organizations to emerge due to their social capital role and access to EU funding in AKP-designed priority areas. This is because rights-based advocacy does not necessarily contribute to the market economy while some groups are the oppressed subjects of the neoliberal system. Similarly, the Muslim bourgeoisie that has aroused since the AKP reign utilized most with its business organizations in shaping and developing Turkey’s private sector and preparing the economy for global market liberalization. Meanwhile, while AKP has enlarged its ideological sphere by its election victories, it has also produced consent in civil society and ensured the regime’s economic resilience. AKP’s irrepressibly rising power, in which it has drifted from democracy to an uncontrolled authoritarianism, has created a normative gap between it and the EU. Consequently, the more that AKP has distanced Turkey from the EU’s political criteria, the more difficult it has become for rights-based organizations to find the needed democratic environment and financial assistance to survive.

Hence, in response to AKP’s conservative diktats, the Gezi Park protests erupted as a historically important moment of civil mobilization in Turkey. This political transformation enabled heterogeneous groups of actors with different spatial, class, ethnic, and religious identities to form a united front to challenge the current hegemonic order and its societal consent. This collectivity became a solidarity-based alliance by engaging with established rights-based organizations, all of which have expressed growing public anger with Erdoğan’s regime. Despite the government’s disproportionate reaction to protests, these new organic intellectuals constituted their own forums and developed politicized solutions to local problems, ranging from environmental concerns to democratic erosion. The EU discursively supported the protestors by condemning the government’s use of force and reminding it about their democratic rights, but in practice it showed an impartiality based on an equilibrium between government and civil society.

Although this new democratic bloc’s demands are compatible with the political criteria, the EU has paid insufficient attention to its voices and offered only limited support to organizations within it. Furthermore, following the mass

refugee influx from Syria, the EU has wanted Turkey's CSOs to help provide humanitarian protection under the EU's aid programs as part of the EU-Turkey deal. Consequently, the EU has turned rights-based organizations into service providers by taming them with financial assistance. However, in doing so, it has helped the Turkish government abuse of civil liberties and weakened the rising role of democratic groups. This has enabled the AKP government to strengthen its hegemony and produce its own alternative silent or docile subjects as civil society by pushing them in a liberal direction with the help of EU funding.

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